# AGENDA ITEM III

## PROPOSED NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAM

## LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY

## GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN TECHNICAL WRITING AND COMMUNICATION

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### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over the past few years, the English Department at Louisiana Tech has received several grants to develop on-line versions of existing courses.  The most recent was a Board of Regents SELECT grant ($34,405), given for the purpose of developing an e-certificate in technical writing and expanding access to other general education courses in English.  As part of the grant's timeline, these developments are to be accomplished by Fall 2005.

### STAFF ANALYSIS

**1.      Objectives/Curriculum**

The program is designed to enhance the ability of students and those already employed to produce high-quality technical documents and related forms of communication such as bids, grants, and proposals.  Training in graphic and oral communication is included.  To enter the program, students must first have completed a baccalaureate degree with a 2.5 overall GPA (and a 2.75 on the last sixty baccalaureate hours), an undergraduate technical writing course (300-level) or its equivalent.

The program totals 15 hours.  Course topics include the following:

- Technical writing theory and practice (seminar)
- Writing articles for scientific and technical journals
- Training and supervising writers in the workplace
- Writing specifications, bids, grants, and proposals
- Current readings in technical communication

Students are required to take four of the five above courses.  The remaining three hours of the program represent a 3-hour elective, either: a) the remaining course from the above list, b) a supervised capstone project or internship course, or c) subject to approval, a graduate-level course in an appropriate area.

Regarding internships, the University described a pilot internship program with GTCI, which it describes as "an award-winning technical writing firm in Dallas. GTCI, which has offices world-wode, manages and supervised large documentation projects... The first project to be worked on jointly between Tech and GTCI will involve a 52,000 page document."

The proposed program is to be offered electronically in its entirety by the end of the Winter Quarter of 2005-06.

## 2.    Need

The skillful production of technical and informational documents is a well-known and constant demand in a broad range of businesses and organizations. There are no other programs of this type offered electronically in Louisiana. Very few programs of this type exist in the nation.

## 3.    Students

The University projects the following enrollment and graduation figures for the certificate program:

|            | 2005-06 | 2006-07 | 2007-08 | 2008-09 | 2009-10 |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| **Headcount** | 15      | 15      | 15      | 15      | 15      |
| **Graduates** | 0       | 0       | 5       | 5       | 5       |

Projections are based on increases in enrollment in technical writing courses at both the undergraduate and graduate level. The University does expect that the electronic offering of this program may elevate enrollment significantly.

## 4.    Faculty

Three full-time faculty are directly associated with the program, and they all currently teach all the courses in the curriculum. Faculty "will receive a release course each to develop" the online versions of their courses. One faculty "already receives a course release to evaluate the e-courses and provide technological support." The University states that no faculty additions are required for the first five years of implementation.

The University states that "all participating faculty have completed training in electronic course design, delivery, implementation, and management." Two of the faculty have published regularly on the topic.

**5.      Library**

Current library holdings supporting the technical writing track in the M.A. in English program are reported to be sufficient for implementation, particularly when compared to other programs of this kind.  The University states that, compared to them, "Louisiana Tech University's expenditures on electronic materials, the most up-to-date and easily-accessed of the library's holdings, is the second highest."  The University also provided a list of relevant journals it holds in the area.

**6.      Facilities/Equipment**

The proposal described the electronic resources and facilities it has in hand to support the electronic offering of this certificate program.  No additional facilities are needed for implementation.

**7.      Administration**

The program will reside in the Department of English and will not affect the administrative structure of the university.

**8.      Accreditation**

There is no accrediting agency for this type of program.

**9.      Budget**

The University reports that for faculty release time, software, and some hard drives, the program will cost the University $69,547 for one year only.

Of this total, faculty salaries, as they relate to this program, comprise $23,402.  A Board of Regents SELECT grant provides funds for faculty release time - $34,405.  The Center for Entrepreneurship and Information Technology will provide $6,290 for necessary hardware and software.  The Department of English will fund the remaining $5,450.

After the first year, the University states, "no additional funds will be needed to support the electronic graduate certificate in technical writing and communication."

**STAFF SUMMARY**

Program need appears to be supportable.  Student interest is healthy and may exceed the University's current estimates as to enrollment.  The staff observes, however, that  the numbers of projected graduates are minimal–just enough to avoid low-completer review in the future.  The proposed curriculum is sound and compares favorably to similar programs nationwide.   Faculty resources are in place.  The library and other facilities and equipment are appropriate and in place.  No administrative changes are proposed.  Accreditation is not an issue.  The budget is reasonable; all necessary funds are in place for implementation.

The University addressed all staff questions and concerns appropriately.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

***The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee grant approval of the proposed Graduate Certificate Program in Technical Writing and Communication (CIP 23.1101) at Louisiana Tech University, effective immediately.***